

IMCOM-Europe Soldiers train at Belgian site

CHIEVRES, Belgium – Every Soldier, regardless of Military Occupational Specialty or unit affiliation, is a Soldier first. Never has that been more apparent than since the U.S. military has become engaged in the Global War on Terrorism.

Many Soldiers, including those in Installation Management Command units around the world, including Europe, have deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan; even more have done so two or three times.

With that in mind, USAG Benelux Soldiers participated in Warrior Week May 14-18 at Camp Roi Albert, a Belgian Army installation in Marche-en-Famenne, about 90 minutes drive southeast of here. The week-long training was designed to provide Soldiers with realistic training that maintains a combat-ready posture. The training was conducted in four lanes, or phases: team-building activities such as confidence courses and combatives training; weapons ranges; Warrior Leader Tasks; and Military Operations Urban Terrain training.

So that Soldiers could train in the right environment, Michael Laney, USAG Benelux host nation liaison, coordinated with the Belgian army for use of Camp Roi Albert.

“This was an opportunity to provide our Soldiers with training outside, away from the garrison environment,” Laney said. “We are leveraging our host-nation partnership by using their installation. In Germany and other places, Soldiers have U.S.-run training areas. Here, we don’t have that capability.”

He said this was the third time Soldiers from USAG Benelux had used Camp Roi Albert.



Sgt. Jeremy Ringo, USAG Benelux, practices throwing hand grenades into a building in between training sessions at the Camp Roi Albert MOUT site, May 17, 2007.

Initially, the Soldiers were put through a “conditioning course” that included about 20 different obstacles that tested strength and agility.

“Each Soldier went through the course twice, the first time for familiarization and the second for speed,” said Sgt. 1st Class Philip Thornton, USAG Benelux, who served as course NCOIC for the day. “Other than some minor bumps and bruises, I think things went pretty well – we got the desired effect from the training.”

Later in the first day, the gymnasium at Camp Roi Albert was used for combatives, or hand-to-hand training. Instructors Sgt. Thomas Taylor, USAG Brussels, and Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Kloss, USAG Benelux, took participants from very basic maneuvers to full speed, letting them switch after a victor was declared.

Thomas explained to participants that the old Army fighting style had very few ground tactics. The new style, developed at Fort Benning, Ga., focuses on ground fighting skills and saving energy to “finish the fight” on the battlefield. “A majority of the battles fought in Iraq are in urban terrain, where hand-to-hand combat is very likely,” he said. This fighting style, derived mainly from Gracie Jiu Jitsu from Brazil, allows Soldiers to disable the enemy without lethally finishing them.

“This training (for the entire week) is especially good and needed for Soldiers who have never been in a field environment,” Kloss said. “And for those of us who have, it’s good because if you don’t use it, you lose it.” He added that combatives training is especially needed for those who are not used to defending themselves while on the ground.

Day two was spent primarily at the weapons range for training reflexive and controlled fire and then taking out pop-up targets, according to Maj. Sonja Granger, USAG Benelux operations officer for directorate of plans, mobilization and security. While at the range, they also conducted Improvised Explosive Device training.



Sgt. 1st Class David Williams (in soft cap), first sergeant for USAG Schinnen and training NCOIC at the Camp Roi Albert MOUT site, does a quick after-action review with Soldiers who completed their first attempt at clearing buildings May 17, 2007, during Warrior Week.

“Many of the Soldiers in the garrison have experience in identifying and reacting to IEDs from Operation Iraqi Freedom,” Granger said.

Days three and four concentrated on some 40 Warrior Leader Tasks, including building-clearance procedures, raids and searches at the MOUT site, where civilian employees from all three Benelux-area garrisons visited to witness the training

Little did they know that they’d be asked to participate.

After receiving a briefing from Granger, the civilians were taken to the MOUT site, where some acted as local villagers, while others played members of the opposing forces.

“I had no idea we were going to get to participate,” said Patsy Herbaut, USAG Benelux acting Equal Employment Opportunity manager. “But it was fun.”



Later, several civilians traveled to the conditioning course to tackle some of the obstacles that the Soldiers had done earlier.

“I think that Warrior Week was a great success, and not just as USAG Brussels Soldier,” said Spc. Charles Fridline. “(We were) able to bond together as friends and Soldiers as part of the Benelux and not separate garrisons.”

Throughout the week, USAG Benelux Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Ford watched from nearby. He said information relayed from recently deployed Soldiers was important, “as that’s where training like this is beneficial to everyone.”

**Story and Photos by
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Pfc. Gerardo Razo, USAG Benelux, keeps an eye out for his fellow squad member and opposing forces during building-clearing training May 17, 2007, at the MOUT site on Camp Roi Albert.